

REMARKS**Objection to the Declaration**

The Examiner has objected to the declaration stating that the declaration does not state the address at which an inventor customarily receives mail. Applicant has supplied the address via the submission of an application data sheet. Accordingly, Applicant requests the withdrawal of the objection.

Objection to Claim 20

The Examiner has objected to claim 20 noting that it is a duplicate of claim 19. Applicant has cancelled claim 20 in response to the objection. Applicant has also cancelled claims 7 and 14 as being duplicates of claims 5 and 12, respectively.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1-2, 4-7, 8-9, 11-14, 15-16, and 18-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,295,513 to Thackston (hereinafter "Thackston").

Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 8, and 15. The amendments are supported by the original application on, inter alia, page 7, line 1 through page 11, line 2. No new matter has been entered.

It is well settled that to anticipate a claim, the applied reference must teach every element of the claim. *See* M.P.E.P. § 2131. Moreover, in order for an applied reference to be anticipatory under 35 U.S.C. § 102 with respect to a claim, "[t]he elements must be arranged as required by the claim." *See* M.P.E.P. § 2131, citing *In re Bond*, 15 U.S.P.Q.2d 1566 (Fed. Cir. 1990). Furthermore, in order for an applied reference to be anticipatory under 35 U.S.C. § 102 with respect to a claim, "[t]he identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as is contained in the . . . claim." *See* M.P.E.P. § 2131, citing *Richardson v. Suzuki Motor Co.*, 9 U.S.P.Q.2d 1913 (Fed. Cir. 1989). Applicant respectfully asserts that Thackston does not satisfy these requirements.

Claim 1 recites, in part:

a question interface for capturing a question in a question object that encapsulates text-based information related to a design issue associated with said product design;
an answer interface for capturing an answer in an answer object that encapsulates text-based information addressing information encapsulated in a selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object; and
a decision interface for capturing a decision in a decision object that encapsulates text-based information defining a product requirement in response to information in said selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object.

Claim 8 recites, in part:

capturing a question in a question object that encapsulates text-based information related to a design issue associated with said product design;
capturing an answer in an answer object that encapsulates text-based information addressing information encapsulated in a selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object; and
capturing a decision in a decision object that encapsulates text-based information defining a product requirement in response to information in said selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object.

Claim 15 recites, in part:

capturing a question in a question object that encapsulates text-based information related to a design issue associated with said product design;
capturing an answer in an answer object that encapsulates text-based information addressing information encapsulated in a selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object; and
capturing a decision in a decision object that encapsulates text-based information defining a product requirement in response to information in said selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object.

In the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), the Examiner asserts that, when users provide comments via the Thackston system, questions and answers take place and decisions are made. *See* Office Action, page 3.

Even though users of the Thackston system may discuss such subject matter, the system in Thackston does not capture data structures in the manner recited by claims 1, 8, and 15. For example, the data structures (“objects”) are functionally related during the capturing process. Namely, the answer object is functionally related to a question object by being linked to that question object. Similarly, the decision object is functionally related to a question object by being linked to that question object. By functionally relating the objects in this manner, it is possible to query product design data to gain an understanding how a

particular decision was made. Such an understanding enables the product development knowledge generated by a given product design to be applied to new product design efforts in an efficient manner. *See* application, page 8, lines 10-21.

No such functional relationship exists in the Thackston system. Instead, Thackston merely discloses that “team members” may apply “comments or mark ups” to highlight particular aspects of a part design model. However, Thackston does not disclose objects encapsulating the type of information recited in claims 1, 8, and 15. Additionally, Thackston does not disclose any linking or functional relationship between those objects.

Accordingly, Thackston does not disclose each and every limitation of claims 1, 8, and 15. Claims 2, 4-6, 9, 11-13, 16, 18 respectively depend from base claims 1, 8, and 15 and, hence, inherit all limitations of their base claim. Accordingly, claims 1-2, 4-6, 8-9, 11-13, 15-16, and 18 are not anticipated.

As previously noted, claims 7, 14, and 20 are cancelled.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 3, 10, and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thackston in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0012007 by Twigg (hereinafter “Twigg”).

To establish a prima facie case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art cited must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. *See* M.P.E.P. § 2143. Applicant asserts that the applied references do not satisfy these criteria.

Claim 3 recites, in part, “each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object is stored in a separate relational database, wherein associations between each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object are captured using foreign keys.”

Claim 10 recites, in part, “storing each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object in a separate relational database, wherein associations between each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object are captured using foreign keys.”

Claim 17 recites, in part, “storing each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object in a separate relational database, wherein associations between each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object are captured using foreign keys.”

The Examiner acknowledges that Thackston does not teach or suggest the limitations of claims 3, 10, and 17 and relies on Twigg to address the limitations of these claims.

However, Twigg merely discloses the use of object oriented classes to store data for a design/drafting system. *See* paragraph [0038] of Twigg. In Twigg, each class contains fields to store various data (“description data, note data, and cost data”) and, hence, the Examiner asserts that these fields are associated with each other. However, claims 3, 10, and 17 do not merely recite a vague sort of association of data elements. Instead, claims 3, 10, and 17 define the association of a question object, an answer object, and a decision object through foreign keys of respective relational databases. A foreign key is a database element in a first database file that maps to an object or entry in a second database file. *See* application, page 9, lines 26-29. There is no subject matter in Twigg to address the detail of these limitations.

Accordingly, the applied references (either alone or in combination) do not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claims 3, 10, and 17. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established for claim 3, 10, and 17.

Conclusion

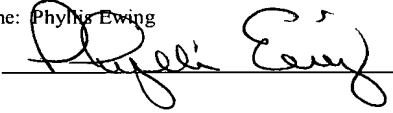
In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge Deposit Account No. 08-2025, under Order No. 10003655-1 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

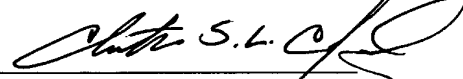
I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as Express Mail, Airbill No. EV482736798US in an envelope addressed to: MS Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

Date of Deposit: July 12, 2004

Typed Name: Phyllis Ewing

Signature: 

Respectfully submitted,

By 

Christopher S.L. Crawford

Reg. No.: 51,586

Date: July 12, 2004

Telephone No. (214) 855-8378